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REASONS TO BE THANKFUL

By Angela E. Lackey
of the Daily News

Phyllis Ferris watched as her grandson, Nathaniel Edward, was adopted. She called it the best of a bad situation -- he gets a good home and she gets to remain close to him. Still, Ferris couldn't help but burst into tears afterward.

"He needs to be there," Ferris said. "This is the only family he's known."

Families adopted children across the state on Tuesday, Michigan Adoption Day. The adoptions of 10 children were completed in Midland County.

It was a day of celebration in a Circuit Court courtroom, borrowed for the day because Probate Judge Dorene Allen's courtroom was too small for the families and friends.

The courtroom was decorated with a banner of blue, red, purple and other colored paper hands, teddy bears sitting on a bench and three round shiny balloons that attracted the attention of several children.

Amy and John Grundas were there to adopt 17-month-old Jayden Charles. The Gladwin County couple have adopted five other children. The couple has had Jayden since he was 4 weeks old.

"We've wanted a large family," Amy said.

"We met a foster child while we were camping," John explained. "We were amazed that all these children were out there."

Debbie Sian understands. She and her husband, Al, have adopted six children and plan to adopt two more. She and the children were there to support Adoption Day.

"I love being a mom," Debbie said. "I was raised very domestic.

"No, it's not a lot of work. This is my family," she continued. "Years ago, people gave birth to big families."

The children were chattering and two boys were playing "I Spy" before Allen came in. But they became quiet when she was announced, as if they knew this was a solemn occasion.

Allen said although most adoption hearings are private, these families agreed to share their special day. And she said she brought a special pen just to sign the final adoption papers. The pen flashed blue and other colors as Allen held it up.

She also explained there are several types of adoptions, including overseas adoptions and stepparent adoptions. There were several stepparent adoptions on Tuesday.

Jade Danielle Sauve was adopted by her stepfather, Michael Sauve.

"I know I have the legal authority to keep her from dating until she's 31," Michael said to laughter.

Alaina Rose, Sebastian Alexander and Arin Marie all were adopted by Robert and Cheryl Humphrey. The children had been in foster care since 2001. Both girls were dressed in velvet, and Sebastian wore a tie and had his short hair spiked a bit.

Nathaniel was the last to be adopted. He was placed into foster care in April 2000. He then climbed onto Allen's lap.

"What are we doing?" he asked her.

"We're going to make it official," she said.

Nathaniel banged the gavel, ending his hearing. He was now a Miiller.



Judge Dorene S. Allen laughs while adoptee Nathaniel Edward Miiller, 3, gives his teddy bear the gavel to close his adoption proceedings. Miiller was one of 10 children whose adoptions were finalized during National Adoption Day at the Midland County Courthouse.

Daily News/Lori Duff



Arin Marie Humphrey, 2, her father, Robert Scott Humphrey, and brother Sebastian Alexander Humphrey, 4, clap as the adoption for their sister, Alaina Rose Humphrey, 5, was finalized on Tuesday.

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From left, Marie Rae LaChance, and her sons Connor LaChance, 9, and Jarred LaChance, 7, watch as their brother's adoption is finalized during National Adoption Day at the Midland County Courthouse. The three brothers were adopted by step-father Keith Alan LaChance during the event.

Daily News/Lori Duff